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ABSTRACT

Verbal productivity and lack of self-disclosure about feelings by counselor trainees may indicate resistance in a supervision session. In order to investigate resistance as it relates to trainees' statements, 20 supervisors viewed and rated a 15-minute videotape of a simulated supervisory session, in which the trainee was instructed to exhibit resistant behaviors. Based on supervisors' ratings, 10 statements were classified as high resistance statements (HRS) and 10 as low resistance statements (LRS). The Computer-Assisted Language Analysis System (CALAS) was used to process the language of the videotaped session according to verb type (state, action, or state experiential). Verbal productivity was high in the HRS and low in the LRS indicating that trainees and supervisors thought talking a lot demonstrated resistance. Analysis of the semantic content of the discourse in the HRS indicated that trainees tended to avoid feeling states and disclosed only thoughts unrelated to supervision. These disclosures were viewed as resistant. The findings indicate that CALAS can be useful in improving counseling skills by establishing the links between the counseling experience and semantic and stylistic measures generated by it.
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A Language Analysis of Resistance in Psychological Treatment

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A Language Analysis of Resistance in Psychological Treatment

Counseling supervision is a learning process comprised of various developmental phases (e.g., Littrell, Lee-Bordin & Lorenz, 1979; Stoltenberg, 1981) in which trainees require different experiences as they gain more information about the therapeutic process, application of techniques, theory, and themselves. Since supervision or supervisors may be perceived as threatening, trainees may become anxious and defensive (Mueller & Kell, 1972). Some defensive behaviors that impede the learning process in supervision are labeled resistance (Allen, Houston & McCarley, 1958; Bauman, 1972).

Resistance is one of the often discussed phenomena in supervision, but it is difficult to define. Bauman (1972) states that specific trainee behaviors cannot always be labeled resistance because resistance is so variable. At times, resistance may be exhibited by defensive communications that demonstrate inefficiency in communication, attempts to be seen in a more favorable light, or excuses to escape anticipated attacks or requests for behavioral changes (Gibb, 1961).

The purpose of this study is to investigate resistance by describing some stylistic and semantic features of trainee statements which have been classified as high resistance statements and low resistance statements. The stylistic and semantic features were generated via The Computer-Assisted Language Analysis System (CALAS). CALAS has been used in previous research to describe phenomena of

psychological treatment in terms of the language used in that treatment (e.g., Wycoff, Davis, Hector & Meara, 1982). Since resistant trainees want to avoid suggestions for change, the more they speak, the less opportunity the supervisor has to speak. In addition, excuses are often made in terms of reasons for actions. When one is anxious and defensive, it can be threatening to reveal one's feelings about oneself, the client or the supervisor. We, therefore, expected that when the trainee was making statements classified as high resistance statements, he would talk more and would focus more on his thoughts and actions than on his feelings.

Method

Procedure

A 15 minute videotape of a simulated supervisory session was produced in a previous study of trainee's resistance to supervision (Moore, 1979). In this session, the trainee was instructed to exhibit resistant behaviors as he and his supervisor were reviewing a counseling session conducted by the trainee. The videotape was viewed and rated by 20 supervisors who had from 2 to 25 years of supervisory experience. On a transcript of the videotape, the 20 supervisors indicated which of the trainee's 37 statements were perceived as verbal, nonverbal, and/or paraverbal forms of resistance.

The focus of this study was on the verbal aspects of the trainee's statements; therefore, only the perceived verbal resistance scores were used. The ten statements that had the highest number of raters

who indicated the presence of verbal resistance were classified as the high resistance statements (HRS). The ten low resistance statements (LRS) were those which were rated by the fewest number of supervisors as examples of verbal resistance. Sixteen or more supervisors rated the high resistance statements as resistance; whereas, only zero to five supervisors rated the low resistance statements as resistance.

The videotape of the supervision session was transcribed and processed through the Computer-Assisted Language Analysis System (CALAS) which has been described in detail elsewhere (e.g., Pepinsky, Baker, Matalon, May & Staubus, 1977; Meara, Pepinsky, Shannon & Murray, 1981).

"Briefly, the CALAS includes a set of computer programs and an algorithm for translating texts in the English language into structural equivalents. It is conducted through two computer languages, SPITBALL and PL/I. Although originally designed to be run on an IBM System Model 370/168 computer using punch cards, CALAS has been adapted for use with the IBM 370/3031 using a series of interface programs with the DEC System 10 for data file storage and off line editing with SOS editing language.." (Meara et al., 1981, p. 112).

The data for this project were processed on the IBM 370/3031 using the DEC System 10 interface programs.

Dependent Measures

Both stylistic and semantic features of the trainee's speech were of interest. Stylistic measures are assumed to be representative of surface structure and to provide information about the style or manner in which a person communicates. Semantic measures are explicitly relational and are assumed to be representative of deeper structure and to provide information about what persons intend in their speech. The stylistic measure chosen for analysis was one of verbal productivity: the total number of clauses (CLT) spoken by the trainee while making HRS and LRS. The semantic measures are based on a modified version of Cook's (1979) Matrix Model of Case Grammar. This model postulates essential and inherent semantic relations between verb and noun phrases in the deep structure of the English language. Cook proposes three primary verb types: (a) state, (b) process, and (c) action. In addition, he proposes three other categories that only exist interactively with the fundamental or primary types: (a) experiential, (b) benefactive, and (c) locative. For reasons explained elsewhere (Meara et al., 1981), we have excluded locative from the modified matrix. The verb types of interest here were state, action, and state experiential.

The definitions used in this work were adopted from Meara et al. (1981). State verbs define a particular noncausal relation between person or things or the state or property of such an object. Action verbs define a causal relation with specifications of an agent in which a person or thing does something (optionally to somebody or

something). Experiential verbs define relations in which states of feeling, sensing, or knowing are attributed, or acts of consciousness or awareness are imputed to a person or thing. State-experiential verbs define cognitive and affective states; we divided the state-experiential verbs into state-experiential cognitive and state-experiential affective. When any of the inherent semantic features of state, process or action is present in simple form, the verb phrase is termed basic. The semantic measures chosen for discussion were the action basic, state basic, state-experiential cognitive, and state-experiential affective verb phrases. We also investigated who or what the trainee was talking about when he used these verbs. When he was talking about himself, the verbs were classified as self-referenced; when he was talking about other persons or things, the verbs were classified as other-referenced. Five statements in which the trainee was talking about himself in conjunction with the supervisor or client were also classified as self-referenced.

Data Analysis

A Mann-Whitney U test (Siegel, 1956) was conducted to compare the CLT's of the 10 HRS and the 10 LRS. Since the LRS contained so few verbs, the frequencies of the self-referenced and other-referenced verb types for HRS were computed and compared across the four verb types of interest.

Results

The CLT score for the 10 HRS was 161; for the 10 LRS, 6. The CLT scores for the HRS and the LRS were placed in rank order and a Mann-Whitney U test comparing the ranks yielded $U = .5$, $p < .001$. This indicates significantly higher verbal productivity was present in the HRS than the LRS.

By definition, the total number of verbs in each group is equal to the total number of clauses. Of the six verbs in the LRS, four were self-referenced and two were other-referenced. Table 1 presents the results for the HRS; 74 were self-referenced and 87 were other-referenced. Table 1 also indicates that when using state basic verbs,

Insert Table 1 about here

the trainee used 43 other-referenced verb phrases and only 8 verb phrases that were self-referenced. The trainee used 31 stative-experiential cognitive (SEC) verbs and only 9 stative-experiential affective verbs (SEA); 29 of the SECs referred to self as did 5 of the SEAs.

Discussion

One must be cautious in generalizing from the results because the assumption of independence for the Mann-Whitney U test may have been violated. Within a dialogue, it is impossible for speaker statements to be independent events, yet the supervisor intervened

between each trainee statement, which might lead one to assume that each trainee statement was a separate response to the supervisor's previous statement. Throughout the interview, only twice were HRS two consecutive trainee statements. In one instance, the supervisor's intervening remarks seemed to be an interruption of a continuing trainee's response and in the other instance, the supervisor made a termination statement which the trainee ignored. In the one instance of two consecutive trainee responses being rated as LRS, the supervisor clarified the trainee's previous low resistance statement. The trainee's statements, themselves, were not independent; yet the ratings for each statement were independently scored by each of the 20 supervisors. The question remains, "Are the HRS independent of the LRS?"

With such cautions in mind, however, the verbal productivity in the HRS is too great to be ignored. Previous research has indicated that verbal productivity has consistently been related to psychological constructs. Hurndon, Pepinsky and Meara (1979) found their measures of verbal productivity related to cognitive complexity as measured by Hunt's Paragraph Completion Method. Wyman's (1983) complexity measure, phrases per clause, was a kind of verbal productivity. She found it related to perceived expertness. Wycoff et al. (1982) found that counselors who had high verbal productivity scores were rated as having low empathy. Apparently, the trainee in this study believed the way to demonstrate resistance

was to talk a lot and the supervisors, who did the rating, agreed. The statements judged to be LRS could best be described as linguistically impoverished. Most of the statements or terms were simply monosyllables or agreements, such as "yes" or "OK." This raises concern about how supervisors rate trainees who do discuss their work in detail. One must be cautious in using simple verbal output as the criterion for determining trainee attitudes; a look at the semantic features of the discourse may yield some information about attitudes and intentionality.

As stated above, the semantic features of the LRS were practically non-existent; yield little about intentionality and do not allow for comparisons with the HRS. Some features of the HRS, however, seem suggestive of intentionality and could provide the impetus for further work. Forty-three out of 51 state basic verbs, almost 85%, were other-referenced. This indicated that the trainee certainly wasn't very self-disclosing about his own state. When using action verbs, however, he was willing to talk about what he did 36% of the time while he discussed what others did 64% of the time. Although his talk is still other-directed, it is not as pronounced in the action basic talk as it is in the state basic expressions.

The experiential results indicate that he is more willing to talk about the thoughts he experiences rather than his feelings. Seventy-seven percent of his state experiential verbs were cognitive, mostly self-referenced. One gets the sense from these results that

the trainee tends to be avoiding feelings and feeling states, and is willing to self-disclose only his thoughts. These thoughts were often "I don't know" or not related to the focus of supervision. And as such, were seen as resistance by the supervisors.

The usefulness of CALAS in improving skills related to counseling lies in the ability to establish links between phenomenon experienced in counseling and supervision and the semantic and stylistic measures generated by it. This is the first attempt to relate measures from CALAS to any named phenomenon of supervision. Although the efforts were disappointing because of the low semantic output in the LRS, a better definition of resistance could yield more informative results.

For now, with caution we can say that in a supervision session verbal productivity and lack of self-disclosure about feelings may tend to be labeled as resistance by supervisors. With equal caution we can state that further stylistic and semantic analysis of resistance via CALAS might prove fruitful.

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Table 1

Frequency of Self-referenced and Other-referenced Verb Types for
High Resistance Statements

	<u>Basic</u>		<u>Experiential</u>		<u>Benefactive</u>		
	Self	Other	Self	Other	Self	Other	
State	Cognitive						97
	8	43	29	2	5	1	
			Affective				
			5	4			
Process	-	3	1	-	2	3	9
Action	13	23	8	7	3	1	55
	21	69	43	13	10	5	161